

## like it's 1989 by myhamartia

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**Summary:**

There was something about when kids blocked memories of their childhoods, he heard. When something shakes the child and theirs brains aren't put together enough to understand it, it gets shelved. Put to the back burner, and then *poof*, it's gone.

That kinda worried him. He could only imagine what could've been so awful to *Trashmouth Tozier* that he decided to forget it all.

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Richie *almost* remembers the summer of 1989 when he was 17 years old.

It takes another 23 years for it all to come back.



## like it's 1989

### Author's Note:

are there a mess of polaroids from the Losers time in the 80's? mmm nAh.

did the Polaroids of the cast inspire parts of this?  
mmmm yEaH

Richie never really understood why he hated cigarettes.

They left a god awful taste in his mouth he could never truly describe. The stench of the tobacco soaked into his nostrils, all at once smelling like wet dirt and blood and rot. It made his stomach roll. His friends just told him that it was nicotine sickness. Once he tried more, it'd ease up. Once he got his tolerance up, he was all set into a new stressful addiction that took hundreds out of his wallet each year!

He tried it, really he did. Richie didn't understand how, in all fucking habits that teenagers dropped into, one of the most casual ones made him nauseated to his core.

He really thought it had something to do with his childhood. There must have been someone, somewhere in his early existence that smoked. Maybe they shouted too much, or maybe he never shaved, or maybe he cuffed Richie up the side of the head once for doing something stupid, and it was all over from there.

He didn't know. He tried to recall it, really. There was something to do with when kids blocked memories of their childhoods, he heard. When something shakes the child and theirs brains aren't put together enough to understand it, it gets shelved. Put to the back burner, and then *poof* , it's gone.

That kinda worried him. He could only imagine what could've been so awful to *Trashmouth Tozier* that he decided to forget it all.

When he asked his mom about it, she pricked herself with a needle. Maggie had been getting into quilting recently. She didn't have a lot

to do around the house, now that Sarah, Richie's older sister, was in college. And Richie himself was out of the house with friends and study groups, and general business teenagers got up to. She had to do *something* during the day, and she never had a proper job before, so... Quilting.

She pricked herself with a needle like Richie had ambushed her with something of a heavy question, not something to the tune of *did anyone smoke around me when I was a kid?* She put her scarlet threaded needle down on the table, away from harm's needy hand, and looked up to him over the rims of her violet glasses frames.

"Your Auntie Andrea," she answered.

Richie frowned. "Auntie Andrea?" See, Richie didn't know of any Auntie Andrea. Never one that went to any of the Christmases, or the Easter egg hunts that Richie was still made to go along to, even if he just chatted with the older cousins and stole beers from garage refrigerators.

Maggie Tozier nodded vaguely, looking older than she was. And then all at once, the look was gone. She picked up her needle with little care. "She's not your Aunt, really. She was a close family friend we had before we moved here. I haven't seen or thought of her in ages, though."

"That's... that's weird." Richi sat on the arm of the couch, hands braced on his thighs. "That's weird, right? You'd think about her sometimes. Why don't I remember her?"

"Oh, I don't know, Richie," she huffed. "Sometimes kids don't pay attention, that's all. Things slip by them."

That made sense when you talked about your neighbour having a dog you didn't know about — or when there was family drama you didn't know until later, when it was brought up in public or in family gossip circles when you were well into adulthood.

But not about people. Not about people close enough to be labeled *Auntie* .

The mood rolling off Maggie had turned sour, so Richie left her alone. He kissed her cheek and told her that he was going out, don't expect him to dinner because he was going to Jenny Rosenshein's.

And he dropped it.

In her eyes, anyhow.

Richie found himself wondering about this Auntie Andrea, trying to recall absolutely anything about her. He couldn't help but come up blank. They lived in a little town in Maine before moving to Illinois. It had a little arcade that he thought about sometimes. He spent his entire last summer in that arcade playing Street Fighter.

The more he thought about it, the more blanks popped up. The holes in his memory. He remembered the move, but he couldn't remember the house he lived in.

His sister Sarah told him that he was born in that house. She said he was too fucking impatient to let Maggie get to the hospital before he was making his way out into the world.

Richie couldn't recall a thing about it. He remembered something, a snippet, really. Pretty wallpaper covered by paper clippings. Some kind of school assignment, maybe. But he would never do something like that to his own room. He thought that it must have been someone else's.

He couldn't remember who.

It was beginning to wig him out.

Jenny told him he was becoming obsessed. There were plenty of people out there with shitty memories and bleary childhoods. It wasn't like he was a special case.

Jenny Rosenshine was Richie's first friend in Chicago. They met over lunch when he, in all his thirteen year old awkwardness coupled with the small town boy in a suddenly dropped into the *huge* city of Chicago, he had no friends to sit with. He was a weird kid with hair that curled on the ends, and coke bottle glasses, and Jenny marched right up to him and decided that they were going to be friends.

She was cool last school year. Someone totally neat that everyone wanted to hang around with. That's what she told Richie, her face twisted into a pretty good Kermit the frog impression. And then over the summer, Karmen with a 'K' Mason told everyone that Jenny had sex with one of the older boys in highschool to try and buy an important spot in the school hierarchy.

Naturally, she was branded a slut. Boys didn't want to touch her, and the girls thought that was one of the funniest things in the world.

Richie didn't mind much. He thought it was pretty fitting, actually. A slut and a fucking geekazoid finding each other and holding tight.

Eventually they made other friends. Lots of other friends. Richie was nothing if not a natural people magnet. The class clown that got along with practically everyone. Even though they had lots of friends to their own, he and Jenny still stuck by each other.

That was history. Three years ago was a long time in the eyes of a teenager, and Richie Tozier was no different. As far as he was concerned, he couldn't remember a time when they *weren't* friends.

Jenny thought he was sweet when he told her that.

Richie tried not to be sick when she kissed him on the mouth. Just a little peck between friends, right? Something that would probably become Something with a capital S later. Maggie thought so. Once they got over themselves, Jenny and Richie would be really cute together.

That didn't feel right to Richie. Seeing as he had more sexual interest in a grapefruit than any girl in his class, he didn't think it was ever going to feel right.

And he fucking hated fruit.

He sort of felt like he was running a scam. Jenny called him sweet, but the fact filled Richie with an odd sort of panicked dread. It was like one of Maggie's frayed quilts. All it took was one little torn seam, and soon the whole fucking thing was coming apart.

He started looking for pictures. Digging into his Mom's closet was

fruitless, but the attic was a little better of a time.

Early Saturday morning called Maggie away to Mass, and his father Wentworth was *long* gone by then, so Richie thought he was pretty safe to go spelunking for forgotten memories. He let the ladder down and idly wondered about the logistics of accidentally falling off the ladder and how likely it was to tumble down the stairs, next.

The attic was stuffy, but it didn't deter him much. He forced his way through winter coats and Christmas decorations until he found the box he was after.

*FAMILY ALBUMS* was written in block letters, and smelled like must and rain damage.

He took a stack of albums and clattered down the ladder, tipping himself to the right as to avoid the fatal left-into-the-stairs fall.

Laying them out took time. He didn't even go to his room, or the kitchen table. He just spread them all out on the landing, a semicircle that reminded him vaguely of a pentagram. He thought that bit was funny. A pentagram of old photo albums trying to uncover some of the dust matted so thick in Richie's mind that he was surprised he could even fucking function.

There was one labeled *Sarah* , another *Richie* . He'd been through these ones recently. Maggie liked to reminisce over how fat Richie's thighs were, and how wispy Sarah's curls used to be before she fried them with a flat iron.

Unless there was something he'd missed in these, they were useless to him.

The next was a family album. With a quick leaf through, he thought it was pretty much useless. Christmas Mass, Easter Mass, birthday dinners. It was the works. Richie still looked through most of the photos, scanning the backgrounds of them, trying to piece together what the house he grew up in looked like.

One picture was odd. It radiated a strange sort of mood — it was just Richie and his parents. Maggie's smile was tense, and Wentworth's

smile only existed in the way one does when the mouth turns up when one squinted against the sun. Richie's face was a full grimace, wearing a baby blue suitcoat and a tie.

Jesus, he thought it must have been a funeral.

He was wrong, as it turned out. The little label to the side was neat, in Maggie's handwriting.

*July 1989. Stanley's Bar Mitzvah*

Stanley.

Okay. Stanley. That was a place to start. He slipped the photo out of the plastic sleeve and set it aside. And then he slapped the photo album with the pile of duds.

There was a smaller album, just the size for a Polaroid.

The label was written in a hurry. His Mom must have been in a hurry, because the large *Summer of 1989* was slanted and not at all neat.

Hell, maybe it was one of Sarah's.

Richie had never seen it before, but picking it up... He thought something sparked. Something... He couldn't quite grasp it.

He put it aside and gathered the rest of the albums up and stowed them back in the boxes on the far side of the attic.

The album stayed on his dresser for another five months. Things piled on top of it, and when they got knocked down, the album spiraled with it, getting lobbed in with forgotten textbooks over the summer, and then put away to the top of Richie's closet with old notebooks of song lyrics and guitar chord progressions and comedy bits.

The obsession with his childhood faded soon enough, just like Maggie said it would.



Richie swallowed down the bile that rose up his throat when he kissed Jenny. His mother cooed when they got together and insisted that they made such a handsome couple.

The blank memories stamped out of his brain was the farthest thing on his mind the first April out of the house, struggling through college. The bile in his throat was from panic, rather from that feeling of wrongness, when Jenny sat on the toilet seat, a pregnancy test in her hand. He threw up that day, a flood of nervous relief when all three tests came back negative.

He felt queasy when Jenny broke up with him, because she knew he didn't love her like she wanted him to.

The photo album sat on top of his closet for years, a spot on the very edge of his brain. Like a chip in the plate of his life — he was too busy taking care of the other cracks and chips to really pay attention to one little ding from so long ago.

When he came back to it, he was forty-one years old. He felt older than he ever had, like he'd been stuck in a dehydrator and the knob was stuck on full blast. His life was sucked out of him right before his very eyes, well before his time.

Bev came with him. Bill in town for an event he was scheduled for an event later in the week. They were going to get dinner.

Richie wanted the emotional trauma and tears out of the way.

He didn't really feel like sobbing into a glass of one of the expensive reds today.

He let himself and Bev into his mother's old house and went right up to his room.

Years ago, Richie bought her a house when his career took off. A nice place in the heat of New Mexico. She loved it. It was close to Sarah, and Richie was only a few hours away.

The house Richie claimed as his childhood home was left empty, used for little more than a storehouse now. The creaking stairs rang in his ears like screams.

Bev talked to him as they went up, asking him questions and pointing out dings in the banister.

"Was that you?" she teased. "Looks like a Trashmouth-sized dent to me."

"My head was like a fucking brick, of course that was me," he scoffed, opening the door to his bedroom. The bed was pushed into the corner in a way he'd hated as a kid. The mattress was stripped bare, and the bedside table was strikingly empty. It was almost eerie, stepping into the room. "Jesus," Richie said on a puff of air. "Fucking creepy in here. It's like children singing in hospitals. Fucking demoralizing."

Bev laughed, and the room seemed that much brighter for it. She sat on the mattress, disturbing the dust and the gentle particles in the air. "I think it's supposed to be sweet."

Richie snorted. "Kids are fucking demonic," he shot back, already reaching up into the closet. He took out a box. The very same box he'd shoved everything into once upon a time. He dumped them out onto the floor without much fanfare, and Bev slid off the bed to sit next to the pile.

"Woow , " she murmured, a slow smile creeping up her mouth. "Look at this!" She picked up one of his notebooks and began leafing through it. "Oh my God, Richie, you wrote music?"

He made a sound in the front of his throat. "I played guitar in high school, I thought I was the shit."

She looked up at him, hair falling over her eyes. She tucked it back behind her ear, and her eyes were alight. "I bet you were fantastic."

"I thought I was," he agreed. "But I was awful." He sank to the floor and folded his legs under him. He brushed a few notebooks and a stray yearbook aside, zeroing in on a black bifold album. He breathed a little curse and hunched over, tracing his fingers over the cover.

Bev was enamored with another page of his notebook, tucking her feet under her. Richie picked up the album and opened the cover.

*The Losers Club — 1989.*

*Bill, Eddie, Stan, Bev, Mike, Ben & Richie*

There were Polaroids. The first one was of all of them together, all posing awkwardly while they waited for the timer to go off. Happy faces looked back at him, seven smiles as the sun hit their faces and casted them in a golden glow. Richie's chin wobbled, and he sucked in a big breath, flicking to the next page.

It was Mikey, seated solidly on Bev's bike, grinning at the person taking the photo while the girl herself was behind him, an arm hooked around his neck, hanging off of him like an old ribbon.

Richie didn't remember owning a Polaroid camera, but he thought he must have. He remembered taking this picture. They'd snuck into a movie, and they were on their way back when Richie snapped the picture. He's put it in the album and scribbled at the bottom: *bev n mike sitting in a tree.*

He would have to send Mike a copy of this one. He was trying to scrapbook them all, recently. Something about lost time and faded memories. After everything, he decided that it was time to let go of the fucking clown and their time in the sewers. He wanted to remember the good things. He'd collected all of Bill's photos from his parents so far, and Richie was pretty sure he'd even gotten some of Stan's from his mother, Andrea Uris.

Stan froze solid. *Andrea* .

He remembered a conversation with his mother over the quilt and threaded needles in the living room. The reason all this started up again so many fucking years ago.

Auntie Andrea was Stan's mom. Stan, whose bar mitzvah he went to when they were kids.

He flipped through the pages, skimming along them rapidly.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, he heard Bev hum. "What do you have, Rich?" she asked softly. She reached out to touch his hand, but he only shook harder.

He stopped flipping the pages.

Stan stood in the sunlight, one hand curled to his side, the other holding a book about birds. He was dressed in a suit, his kippah faithfully clipped into his hair over curls that had been done up by his mother.

That was the day of his bar mitzvah.

*"I'm a Loser, and I always fucking will be." Stan the Man's balls finally dropped!!*

That fire was still bright in his eyes, and Richie could remember everything about that day. He remembered Stan's speech, and just how fucking *proud* he'd been of him. Definitely a little impressed. What Stan did took *balls*. Just like he'd said.

He remembered the last time he was in the temple, last year when Mike called them all back. Richie was looking for his token, and that was the first place he'd stopped.

"Honey," Bev said softly. He didn't know when she'd come to sit next to him, or when he'd started crying, but he was certainly doing both of those things. He turned into her shoulder, cursing a blue streak. It had almost been a year since Stan had killed himself. Since Eddie—

He squeezed his eyes shut and turned into Bev more, wrapping his arms around her.

She soothed a hand over his back and ran his hands through his hair.

It took a long time for him to calm down, but when he did, he didn't immediately pull away from Bev. He knew she was flipping through the pages on her own, taking in the old memories. He could hear her breath hiccuping sometimes. "Look at this one," she urged softly, nudging him until he sat up.

They were grimy. Every one of them. There were two pictures to this page, corners overlapping each other. It was the day of the cistern. The lot of them were covered in sewage, but it hadn't even mattered. They had never been more intertwined than that day.

Well, maybe when Stan scooped up that fucking broken Pepsi bottle. The pact seared them together, but they belonged to each other long

before then.

The first photo, Richie took. None of the others were posing, they just slumped into each other with tired smiles. Eddie paused his incessant freakout to look at him with wide eyes. Richie smiled tearfully at it, not giving himself much time to dwell on it.

Bill was the one who took the second picture. Richie's arm was slung around Eddie, the other hand pinching his nose with a sour face. Eddie was glaring at him. Stan looked too tired to be bothered, blood smeared across his face and down his neck. Mike was laughing at them, and Bev smiled so sunnily. Ben smiled at her, his hands braced on his handlebars.

The caption was simple. Richie didn't think he wrote it at all. Maybe it was Big Bill's handwriting.

*The Losers' Club. Summer of 1989 .*

**Author's Note:**

i was smoking and thinking about how much i hate smoking and then i took like 24 voice memos with lines from this fic

i hope you like it! richie and bev's friendship hits so different.

here's my [tumblr](#)! send me prompts and stuff if u want

don't forget to comment!!